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ABSTRACT

The use of systematic prompting and monitoring to increase written sentence production during a ten-minute assigned composition task was investigated with 78 learning disabled (LD) students in grades 7-12. Subjects were classified as LD, were receiving special education services, and evidenced at least a 2-year lag in written language skills. Six experimental groups each consisted of 13 students randomly assigned to one of two prompting conditions: Systematic Prompt Reduction (SPR) or Random Prompt Administration (RPA). The SPR condition included four levels of prompts administered in order from most independent to most dependent: self-initiating, motivational, content-related, and literal. Students were also randomly assigned to one of three monitoring and recording conditions: No Monitoring (NM), Prompt Monitoring (PM), and Prompt and Production Monitoring (PPM). Analyses of variance revealed no statistically significant differences in either production or quality of final compositions among the six groups. It is suggested that future investigations of systematic prompt reduction techniques include monitoring of prompts and production in the context of a cognitive behavior modification strategy with a more selective group of LD students. Appendices provide the sentence production topics, the Sequential Prompt Reduction prompts, the Systematic Prompt Reduction manual, and a composition rating scale. Twenty-four references are also provided. (Author/JW)

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Efficacy of a Systematic Prompt Reduction Strategy in Teaching Independent Composition

[Final Report]

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Division of Special Education and Communication Disorders

The Pennsylvania State University

August 25, 1985

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the U.S. Department of Education
Grant #84.023.

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Abstract

The use of systematic prompting and monitoring to increase sentence production during a ten minute assigned composition task was investigated with 78 learning disabled (LD) students in grades 7-12. Subjects were public school students classified as LD, receiving special education services, and evidencing at least a two year lag in written language skills. Six experimental groups each consisted of thirteen students randomly assigned to one of two prompting and one of three monitoring conditions. The Systematic Prompt Reduction (SPR) condition included four levels of prompts administered in order from most independent to most dependent whenever a student could not verbalize an appropriate sentence to write within twently seconds. In the Random Prompt Administration (RPA) condition, when a student could not generate a sentence within 20 seconds the prompt level randomly preassigned to that sentence was administered first, then if the student failed again to generate a sentence within twenty seconds a level four prompt was administered. The three monitoring conditions included: Monitoring Prompts and Production (MPP), in which the average prompt score and number of sentences written were monitored and recorded daily by the student; Monitoring Prompts (MP), in which the daily average prompt score was monitored and recorded by the

student, and No Monitoring (NM), in which the student received no feedback on his/her performance at the conclusion of the writing period. Following nine instructional sessions, students wrote a tenth composition independently with no prompting or monitoring. Analyses of variance using 2x3 completely random factorial designs were completed for sentence production and quality ratings, assigned by two outside judges, for the final compositions. Students in the GPR-MPP group wrote the most sentences (mean production=12.5) and students in the RPA-NM group wrote the least (mean production=8.9). Analyses of variance revealed no statistically significant differences in either production or quality of final compositions among the six groups. The authors discuss limitations of the study and suggest that future investigations of systematic prompt reduction techniques include monitoring of prompts and production in the context of a cognitive behavior modification strategy with a more selective group of LD students.

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Introduction

Fluent written language skills are required across many curriculum areas for academic success. Although frequently cited as a deficit of mildly handicapped students (Hermreck, 1979; Myklebust, 1973; and Poteet, 1978), few empirical studies have identified effective strategies for remedial instruction. One problem is that composition is a complex process which has not traditionally been defined in behavioral terms. A second problem has been limitations in generalizing the results of categorically delineated studies to other mildly handicapped groups.

Characteristics of LD students written language have been documented most extensively. Research at the Kansas Institute for Learning Disabilities pinpointed written language skills as a deficit skill area consistently evidenced by LD and low achieving versus normal secondary age students (Moran, 1981). Poplin, Gray, Larsen, Banikowski, and Mehring (1980) assessed the written language skills of students in grades 3-8 using the Test of Written Language (TOWL) (Hammill & Larsen, 1978), and found significant differences between LD and normal students at all grade levels. However, although normal students improved or at least maintained their TOWL scores as they advanced from grades 3-4 to grades 7-8, LD students did not. By the time they reached grades 7-8, LD students'

scores had fallen below the level achieved in grades 3-4. These studies suggest a cumulative educational deficit for which junior high is a critical instructional period.

One frequently cited oral (Parker and Berryman, 1981) and written language skill in which handicapped students are deficient is production. Hermreck (1979) found that normal students (grades 3-6) wrote 42% more words than LD students on the Inventory of Written Expression. Myklebust (1973) used the Myklebust Picture Story Language Test to compare writing performance of normal and LD students. LD students scored significantly lower in total number of words and words per sentence, although there was no significant difference between LD and normal students in the number of sentences produced. Poteet (1978), using the same assessment instrument, found that LD students averaged 50% less words and sentences than normal students.

Interventions demonstrated to be effective in increasing written language production have consistently contained one or both of the following elements: systematic reinforcemnt and systematic feedback. Pertinent research results for both are reported as is an initial investigation into the use of a sequential prompt technique.

Reinforcement. Brigham, Graubard, and Stans (1972) investigated the use of a "sequentially additive

contingencies" reinforcement system with 13 students in a fifth grade special class through a modified multiple baseline design. The number of points students received was contingent first upon just working during the writing period, then upon the number of words written, then the number of different words used, and lastly upon the number of new words not used in previous compositions. Students' performance improved in all reinforcement conditions; performance changed the most during the number of words written contingency phase.

Maloney and Hopkins (1973) used a similar procedure and design in a study of written language with 14 students grades 4-6. Students first received reinforcement contingent on participation, then for the number of different adjectives used, then for the number of different action verbs, and lastly for the number of different adjectives, action verbs, and sentence beginnings. The number of sentences written (10) was a fixed requirement. The number of letters and words produced remained stable across conditions. All target skills improved during all reinforcement phases. The targeted contingency skill improved significantly during each phase, although the high level of performance was not maintained in successive contingency conditions.

Ballard and Glynn (1975) also used a multiple baseline

design to investigate the use of self-recording on a similar set of composition components. Fourteen third grade students alternated between baseline (self-monitoring only) and intervention (self-monitoring and self-reinforcement) phases. During intervention phases self-reinforcement was contingent on production of target composition components. As in Maloney and Hopkin s study, production of target composition components increased significantly during contingent reinforcement phases. Reinforcement for the number of sentences written had the greatest effect on production of all monitored components (number of sentences, different action words, and descriptive words) as well as one of the highest time on task rates.

Campbell and Willis (1979) demonstrated that even creative characteristics of writing production can be modified through reinforcement. Twenty-minute compositions of 26 normal fifth graders were rated on Torrences' measures of creativity: flexibility, fluency, elaboration and originality. Reinforcement for creative score and improvement in the targeted creative composition characteristics resulted in a 72% increase in scores from baseline. Scores in the second baseline interval were only slightly lower than in intervention, but reflected a downward trend. A follow-up phase providing intermittent

reinforcement resulted in maintenance of a 57% increase in creativity scores from the initial baseline level.

Reinforcement contingent on specific elements of written language that have been explained and demonstrated to students appears then to have an immediate, positive effect on production. However, dependence on external reinforcement systems may be undesirable or impractical in secondary school settings (Deschler, Schumaker, & Lenz, 1984). Teachers may not have access to meaningful reinforcers (they may require consistent participation of significant others, be too costly, or be too time-consuming). In addition, a fundamental goal of secondary LD programs is for students to become more independent and rely less on structure imposed by their teachers (Deschler, Warner, Schumaker, Alley, & Clark, 1983). For that reason, contingent reinforcement was not employed in the current study. A sequential prompt reduction technique, in which the amount of teacher prompting and support was systematically reduced as the student produced more sentences independently, was investigated as an alternative.

Feedback procedures. The effects of reinforcement appear to be enhanced when immediate feedback on target behaviors is provided through self-scoring. Van Houten, Morrison, Jarvis, and MacDonald (1974) had fifty-five second and

fifth graders write for a ten minute period. During baseline students were told only to write as much as they could; during intervention students were told to try to beat their own best record (for number of words written) which had been posted in the front of the classroom, and to count and record their score at the conclusion of each session. Production doubled during intervention phases.

Van Houten and MacLellan (1981) measured writing producton of fifty-four eleventh graders by number of thematic units (Hunt, 1965) produced per five-minute composition. A thematic unit (t-unit) consists of an independent clause accompanied by any number of dependent clauses; it is the minimal part of a sentence that could stand alone (Hunt, 1965). Three different interventions were used: feedback (including self-scoring and posting of highest scores), instruction in sentence combining, and a combinatior of feedback and sentence combining instruction. Instruction in sentence combining alone had no significant effect on thematic unit production; however, feedback and self-recording did. The most powerful intervention was the combined use of sentence combining instruction and a feedback component that included self-scoring and public posting of scores.

Specific performance feedback appears to provide students with a vehicle for self-monitoring that in turn

enhances their response to instructional interventions. Therefore, in the present study students were also assigned to one of three monitoring conditions, in order to determine if any significant interaction existed between monitoring and systematic prompt reduction (SPR) procedures.

Despite data demonstrating the efficacy of reinforcement and feedback procedures, there has been limited documentation of empirical work testing the value of fading procedures in composition instruction. This is a curious observation in view of the frequency with which fading is discussed as a potential teaching procedure in methods texts (Swanson & Reinert, 1979; Walker & Shea, 1980). Schloss (1984) has suggested that a sequential prompt procedure can be utilized by teachers to gradually decrease students' reliance on teacher administered prompts as they become more competent in a skill. Recent research supports the use of a systematic prompt reduction procedure in combination with monitoring number of sentences written to increase writing production of emotionally disturbed adolescents (Schloss, Harriman & Pfeifer, in press). However, further investigation of the effects of a systematic prompt reduction technique with a larger sample and other mildly handicapped students (i.e. LD) is needed. In addition, the relationship between

monitoring and promoting effects has not yet been clarified.

The present study sought to answer three questions concerning the use of a SPR technique:

1. Is there a significant difference in writing production between students who receive systematically administered prompts (according to SPR guidelines) and students who receive randomly administered prompts?

2. Are there significant differences in writing production between students who monitor and record their sentence production, those who monitor and record their sentence production and dependence on teacher prompts, and those who do not use a monitoring procedure?

3. What significant interactions or differential effects exist between the use of systematized versus random prompts and the use of student production monitoring techniques?

Method

Students

Students were selected according to the following criteria: a) assigned to grade 7-12 in a public school, b) previously identified as LD in accordance with the Federal regulations for PL 94-142 and Pennsylvania State guidelines, and c) evidencing a discrepancy of at least two years between expected and actual achievement in the area of written language skills. The language achievement discrepancy had to be documented through a current levels of performance statement in the student's Individual Educational Plan, a language arts score on a group administered achievement test such as the California Achievement Test, or a score on an individually administered diagnostic test of written language such as the Test of Written Language (See Table 1). Potential students were identified through teacher referral based upon the previously stated criteria.

Table 1

Percent of Students Evidencing Written Language Deficiencies According to Designated Records

I.E.P. Present Levels of Performance	22%
I.E.P. Goals and Objectives	46%
Group Achievement Test (Language Score)	29%
Individual Diagnostic Test (Language Score)	28%

Note. N=76

Potential subjects for whom informed consent was obtained from parents participated in the study. Students attended six schools in three different school districts. Two of the schools were located in a midsized city where the predominant employment is in manufacturing, two were located in a small city containing a private college, and two were located in small, rural agricultural towns. The mean age, grade, and IQ level of students appears in Table 2.

Table 2

Mean, Range, and Standard Deviation for Students' Age, Grade, and Full-scale IQ

	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Minimum	Maximum
Age (years)	15.93	1.9	12.3	20.9
Grade	9.08	1.6	7	12
Full IQ	91.6	8.9	73	115

Note. N=76

Writing Topics

Thirty potential composition topics were collected from a junior high student, a secondary LD English teacher, a secondary English teacher, a middle school English teacher, an LD consultant, and a non-educator. Project staff reviewed and edited the submitted topics to eliminate

duplication and ensure a consistent format and level of difficulty. A pool of nineteen acceptable topics resulted, from which ten were randomly selected for use in the study. Topics were assigned to sessions so that all students received the topics in the same order. (The request for topics and a list of topics appears in Appendix A).

Prompting Procedures

Students were randomly assigned to one of two instructional prompt conditions: Systematic Prompt Reduction (SPR) or Random Prompt Administration (RPA). The SPR condition included four levels of prompts administered in order from most independent to most dependent: Level 1, self-initiating, Level 2, motivational; Level 3, content-related; and Level 4, literal. Examples of prompts at each level are provided in Appendix B. A student was allowed twenty seconds within which to verbalize an appropriate sentence on the assigned topic. If a sentence was articulated verbally by the student within the designated time period, a prompt score of "1" was recorded for that sentence. If a complete, appropriate sentence were not generated within twenty seconds, then a Level 2 prompt was administered following which the student was again allowed twenty seconds to verbalize an appropriate sentence. This procedure was continued until either the student or the teacher (a Level 4 prompt) generated a sentence to be

written. Once the sentence was recorded then the student was cued to generate the next sentence.

The same prompt levels were used in the RPA condition, but were administered in random rather than sequential order. Randomly assigned prompt levels were printed on each sentence box on the RPA recording forms. As in the SPR condition students were cued and then allowed twenty seconds to generate a sentence. If the student failed to articulate an appropriate sentence within that time period then the teacher provided a prompt at whatever level (2-4) had been randomly preassigned to that sentence. If after twenty seconds the student still failed to produce a sentence, then one was provided by the teacher (Level 4).

Monitoring Procedures

Students were also randomly assigned to one of three monitoring and recording conditions: No Monitoring (NM), Prompt Monitoring (PM), and Prompt and Production Monitoring (PPM). In the NM condition, students were not asked to monitor or record their daily performance. At the conclusion of each session the teacher said, "Thank-you", or "You worked well today". However, the teacher never provided specific performance feedback, encouraged the student to monitor and track daily performance, or referred to goal-setting.

In the PM condition, students monitored and recorded

their daily average prompt scores. The average prompt score was computed by dividing the sum of the highest prompts administered per sentence by the total number of sentences written. Answers were rounded off to the nearest tenths. The teacher encouraged them to decrease their prompt score on successive sessions. In addition, the teacher responded positively to student initiated concerns about how to decrease the score and goals to work towards.

In the PPM condition, students monitored and recorded the total number of sentences written and average daily prompt score at the conclusion of each session. As with the MP group, students were encouraged to work towards improved scores in each successive session.

Training Assistants

The student investigator and five research assistants conducted ten individual writing sessions with each of the 78 students. Prior to implementing the monitoring and prompting procedures, assistants participated in a series of training activities. Assistants were provided with a manual containing a list of required training activities, a description of instructional procedures for each experimental condition, a table describing and providing examples of the four prompt levels, scripted directions for each instructional session, writing topics for each session, and sample recording forms (Appendix C). During

the training session, a five minute writing session for the RPA condition was modeled by the student investigator. Then the recording forms for all six experimental conditions were reviewed. Lastly, assistants completed a sample recording form while the student investigator demonstrated a five minute SPR writing session. Assistants were then required to practice the procedures and return at least two completed recording forms for each condition (SPR and RPA) and score two taperecorded sessions with at least 90% accuracy prior to conducting any sessions with project students.

The consistency with which the experimental procedures were applied was monitored throughout the data collection process. All sessions were tape recorded, and then randomly selected tapes were scored by the Student Researcher or project assistants. Each prompt administered and the twenty second delay preceding each prompt were scored. The percent of agreement between the person conducting the session and the person scoring the tape was then computed by dividing the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus the number of disagreements, and multiplying by 100. Rate of agreement per session ranged from .57-1.00, with only three agreements less than .80. Average inter-rater agreement for 27 sessions was 91 percent.

Experimental Procedures

The Student Investigator and trained Project Assistants conducted 780 individual writing sessions between January and May, 1985. Each student participated in ten writing sessions within a six week period. The format for each writing session included scripted directions (Appendix C), discussion of topic, ten minutes of writing (during which the experimental prompting procedures were implemented), and student recording of data (during which the experimental monitoring procedures were implemented). During the final session, number ten, students were instructed to write on the assigned topic independently without any prompting or monitoring. The number of sentences written during session ten was used as a post-test measure of production for an analysis of variance.

In addition, the session ten compositions were assigned quality ratings by three independent judges for a second analysis of variance. The judges had each taught at the secondary level for at least three years; the first was an English teacher who specialized in English as a second language, the second was a secondary LD Resource teacher, and the third was an LD teacher experienced in composition research. The first two judges had prior experience with analytic rating scales such as the one used in the present study. The judges were instructed to read through all 78

compositions once, then to reread each composition and rate it on each of the categories designated on the analytic scoresheet (Appendix D). The categorical scores were then summed to obtain a total score. Each of the four categories were assigned a rating from 1-5 (three indicating average and five indicating excellent quality), allowing for a total score of 4-20 points. The compositions were randomly ordered in terms of experimental group membership, and no identifying information appeared on the composition except for a student number. Judges were instructed not to spend more than two minutes per composition when rating. The ratings of the three judges were evaluated for agreement using Chronbach's coefficient alpha. The rates of agreement between judges were .80, Judges 1 and 2; .23 Judges 2 and 3; .24 Judges 1 and 3; for a total of .56 (Judges 1, 2, and 3). This overall rate of agreement is within the range reported in similar studies by Maloney and Hopkins (1973) of .46 and Ballard and Glynn (1975) of .69.

Results

Two 2x3 randomized factorial designs (Kirk, 1968) were employed to compare mean differences among the six experimental groups. The first ANOVA analyzed sentence production on the session ten post-test (Table 3). The results indicated no statistically significant differences at the .05 level of confidence.

Table 3

Analysis of Variance for Sentence Production on Post-test

Source	df	MS	F value	p
M	2	7.01	.40	.672
P	1	20.51	1.17	.284
M * P	2	47.01	2.68	.076
Error	72	17.56		
Total	77	18.09		

However, analysis of mean data revealed that the SPR-MPP (systematic prompts - monitoring prompts and production) group, hypothesized to perform the best, produced an average of four more sentences than the RPA-NM (random prompts-no monitoring) group, hypothesized to perform the worst (Table 4). Furthermore, two of the three systematic prompt groups were among the three highest performing groups.

The second ANOVA analyzed quality ratings for the session ten post-test compositions. Because the agreement between Judge 3 and the other judges was low, the total analytic

scores assigned by all three judges were summed for each composition (Ballard & Glynn, 1975). The mean scores and standard deviations for each rater and experimental group appear in Table 5.

Table 4

Group Means and Standard Deviations for Sentence Production on Post-test

Group	SPR-MPP	SPR-MP	RPA-MPP	RPA-MP	SPR-NM	RPA-NM
Mean	12.54	9.85	9.62	11.69	11.38	8.92
S.D.	4.80	3.01	4.09	3.58	3.67	4.73

Table 5

Group Means and Standard Deviations for Quality Ratings on Post-test per Judge

Group	SPR-MPP	SPR-MP	RPA-MPP	RPA-MP	SPR-NM	RPA-NM
Judge 1						
Mean	10.31	10.62	9.54	10.00	11.07	9.00
S.D.	2.01	2.44	2.24	2.54	2.05	2.35
Judge 2						
Mean	7.80	8.31	7.15	7.92	8.46	7.00
S.D.	1.97	2.05	1.46	2.67	2.53	1.71
Judge 3						
Mean	9.46	9.23	10.15	8.30	8.92	9.00
S.D.	3.20	2.26	1.35	2.05	2.23	3.06
Total						
Mean	27.54	28.15	26.85	26.23	28.46	25.00
S.D.	5.44	5.04	2.88	5.71	4.97	5.56

The ANOVA identified no statistically significant differences in qualitative ratings among the six experimental groups (Table 6). Thus, the greater production by the MPP-SPR, MP-RPA, and NM-SPR groups were not achieved at the expense of quality.

Table 6

Analysis of Variance for Quality Ratings on Post-test

Source	df	MS	F value	p
M	2	12.99	.47	.62
P	1	10.73	.39	.53
M * P	2	36.01	1.32	.27
Error	72	27.36		
Total	77	26.99		

Discussion

The preceding results failed to conclusively demonstrate the effectiveness of monitoring and prompting procedures in stimulating increased writing production by mildly handicapped adolescents. However, the combination of a systematic prompt reduction procedure and self-monitoring of the average number of prompts received and the number of sentences written per session had the greatest effect on production. Students in that group wrote an average of 3.89 more sentences during the final session than students who had received random prompts with no monitoring. This difference is comparable to that reported in an earlier study on systematic prompting with ED

adolescents (Schloss, Harriman & Pfeifer, in press). In a single subject multiple baseline design, students wrote an average of 3.2% more sentences during intervention (sequential prompt) phases than during baseline (random prompt) phases.

Students who received sequential prompts performed better than students who received random prompts, with the exception of the monitoring prompts only groups. This interaction effect was perhaps the most surprising result. In a previous production study, Ballard & Glynn (1975) did not identify any significant effect for self-monitoring alone for a comparable length intervention (eight days); however, students in their study did not receive any standard teacher assistance such as random prompts in the self-monitoring condition. Even random prompts, in the presence of self-monitoring of prompt level, appear to facilitate increased independence in composing. Perhaps the lower performance of the systematic prompt and prompt monitoring group can be attributed to demand characteristics. Because of self-monitoring only their prompt level, the students in that group may have been more attuned to decreasing their prompt level than to increasing the number of sentences written. This attitude may have persisted during session ten, even though no teacher prompts were actually administered. However, the differential effects of monitoring prompts in the presence of sequential and random prompts remains unexplained, and warrants further investigation.

No significant differences were found between the groups on

quality ratings of their session ten compositions. It is important to note that throughout the study students were not directed to improve the quality of their compositions in any specific way, but rather to increase only sentence production. Previous studies utilizing contingent reinforcement for various aspects of composition have found that only the contingent components specified in each phase increased significantly (Maloney & Hopkins, 1973). This also appeared to be the case with prompting, with the exception as previously noted, of sequential prompts and monitoring prompts.

Thus, the use of systematic prompting, particularly in conjunction with self-monitoring of prompt-use and sentence production can be used to set the stage for intervention with various composition components. At least paragraph length compositions are necessary to focus on many content and organizational features of writing in context (Haley-Jones, 1979). The SPR-MPP technique can aid the teacher in enabling students to produce such writing in a minimal amount of time. Although direct teacher instruction is required initially, the amount of teacher support is systematically reduced as the student becomes more fluent.

In the present study, by the fourth or fifth session, some students were observed informing the teacher of the type of the prompt required next, or prompting themselves. Subsequent research could investigate the use of a cognitive behavior modification strategy in which students were overtly trained to

prompt themselves as teacher provided prompts were faded. Such strategies have been used effectively to train students to self-cue and reduce student dependence on teacher prompts (Lloyd, 1980).

The effects identified in this study were statistically weak, largely due to excessive variance in student performance, both during the intervention and at the conclusion of the writing sessions. This is frequently a problem in research with LD students, as there can be great variability in LD students' performance within and among schools (Chandler & Jones, 1984 and McKinney, 1984). For example, students' post-test score performance ranged from 2 to 23 sentences, with a standard deviation of 4.23. One possible solution to this problem is to define the target population more narrowly, and following screening retain only those within the newly defined sample. A decision rule could be implemented to exclude students who had required less than three prompts in the first three sessions, or any students who were never exposed to an entire sequence of prompts. Such a procedure would ensure a more homogenous group of LD students, but would also limit the external validity or generalizability of the results.

In conclusion, this study failed to obtain statistically significant evidence of the efficacy of a systematic prompt procedure. However, trends in the data suggest that if the identified methodological limitations in the current study were to be corrected, further research would support earlier

findings that a systematic prompt reduction procedure can be used by special education teachers at the secondary level to increase independent, written language production. The technique has now been investigated with LD as well as ED students. Also, self-monitoring of prompt use and number of sentences written was found to enhance the effects of systematic prompting. Additional research to investigate the interaction between type of prompting and self-monitoring of prompt level is suggested.

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Appendix A: Topics

#1 VACATION

There have been a lot of advertisements on television for sweepstakes and contests, lately. If you won a one week all expenses paid vacation, where would you go? What would you do? Who, if anyone, would you take with you?

#2 PERSON

Describe a person who has done something that you liked or disliked whom you'll never forget. Perhaps your grandmother sent you on a trip to Disneyworld or your father practiced football with you so you could make the school team. Maybe someone did something mean like slashing your bicycle tires or spreading false rumors about you. Tell why you like or dislike the person you'll never forget. What happened to make you feel that way?

#3 SCHOOL

For most students, going from elementary school to Middle or Junior High School is a big change. Do you remember how you felt on the first day? Describe what you did, saw, or felt as you walked into your first class. How was your new school different from elementary school? What were the teachers like? Did you ever get lost or forget your schedule?

#4 DRUGS

If you were a parent, would you talk to your kids about drugs? If not, why not? If so, what would you say? How would you deal with your kid if you found out s/he were using drugs?

#5 MUSICIANS

Describe your favorite musician or music group. Is your favorite a singer, drummer, pianist or something else? What kinds of music does s/he/they play: classical, soul, hard rock, jazz, country, or something else? How did you first hear them? What are some of your favorite songs? What do you like about his/her/ their music?

#6 HABITS

Do you consider yourself a neat person or a sloppy person? Why do you think you developed those habits? Would you like to change the way you are? Describe some of the situations that your neatness habits or someone else's bring about.

#7 PARENTS

Lots of teenagers have problems getting along with one or both of their parents. How is your relationship with your parents? Do you have trouble talking to your parents? What do you think causes problems between parents and teenagers? What do you do to solve problems with your parents?

#8 FIGHT

If there were a fight between two older students at your bus stop or at school, what would you do? Would you let them fight or would you try to stop them? How would you try to stop them from fighting? Would you tell anyone else?

#9 TV

Some people think that watching TV is a waste of time. Do you feel that there's anything worth watching on TV? If you watch TV, what's your favorite program? Do you think kids watch too much TV?

#10 SUMMER

In only a few more months it will be summer! Are you looking forward to summer? Why or why not? Do you have any plans yet for this summer? Will you visit friends or relatives, go to school, or work?

Appendix B: Sequential Prompt Reduction Technique Prompts

Prompt Levels

Level 1 - Self-initiated

The student verbalizes an appropriate sentence within twenty seconds after the teacher cues, "Tell me what you're going to write first," or "Tell me what you're going to write next." If a student verbalizes an incomplete sentence, the teacher should say, "That's good, but it's not a complete sentence. Try starting with ," or "Can you make it into a complete sentence?," or "Can you add an ending?" If the student verbalizes a run-on sentence, the teacher should repeat the first part of the sentence that constitutes a complete sentence, and say "That's a good sentence, write it." Once the student has verbalized a sentence to write, then the teacher may do anything necessary to enable the student to get it written, such as providing spelling and reinforcement for getting it down quickly.

*For an incomplete sentence, say, "That's not a complete sentence, can you say it in a complete sentence?"

Level 2 - Motivational

The teacher encourages the student to initiate the task.
(EX) "Why don't you read what you have written so far to see what should come next?"
"What are you going to say next?"
"What would be a good way to start your paragraph?"

*For an incomplete sentence, say, "A complete sentence has a subject and a verb. The subject tells who or what the sentence is about. The verb tells what happened. Can you say your idea in a complete sentence?"

Level 3 - Content-related

The teacher provides content cues to stimulate student interaction.
(EX) "How did that make Jim feel?"
"How did Karen respond?"
"Describe what the car looked like."

*For an incomplete sentence, say, "Your sentence has a verb (...) but not a subject. Who is the sentence about?"

Level 4 Literal

The teacher provides a sentence verbatim.
(EX) "Write: Tom decided to leave."
"Write: The more it snowed, the colder Ray became."

Appendix C: Systematic Prompt Reduction Manual

TRAINING ACTIVITIES

I. Read the manual describing the experimental conditions and procedures.

II. Meet with the student investigator to:

a. observe a sample five minute writing session for the RPA condition

b. review the four prompt levels, protocols for the RPA and SPR conditions, and personal progress charts for the PPM and PM conditions

c. complete a sample protocol while observing a five minute writing session for the SPR condition

III. Score a taped SPR test session achieving 90% agreement with a prescored key

IV. Demonstrate the SPR and RPA procedures to the student investigator in sample five minute writing sessions

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES

MONITORING

No Monitoring (NM)

In the no monitoring condition, subjects will not be asked to monitor or record their daily performance. At the conclusion of the writing session the teacher should simply say "Thank-you for working so well today," or "We're all finished for today. I'll see you on Thursday." General praise or encouragement for cooperating may be offered, but no specific feedback or comments regarding the student's progress should be made.

Prompt Monitoring (PM)

In the prompt monitoring condition, students will monitor and record their daily average prompt score. At the end of the ten minute writing period the teacher and student should figure the score together by summing the final prompt scores per sentence and then dividing by the total number of sentences. The student should then record the day's score on the personal progress chart. Students in this group should be encouraged to discuss their progress. Specific score increases may be noted and they may be given encouragement for their accomplishments, although the emphasis should be on self-evaluation. The teacher should ask questions such as: "How does your score today compare to yesterday's ?"and "Does it look like you are starting to write faster with less help from the teacher?". The session should always conclude with goal setting. The student should be asked "Do you think that you can write faster with less teacher help next time we meet?" and "How much do you think you can lower your prompt score?".

Prompt and Production Monitoring (PPM)

In the prompt and production monitoring condition, students will monitor and record the total number of sentences written and average prompt score at the conclusion of each session. Following the ten minute writing period, the student and teacher should count the total number of sentences written and figure the average daily prompt score by summing the final prompt scores for all sentences and dividing the sum by the number of sentences in the composition. The student should then record both the number of sentences and the average prompt score on the personal record chart.

Students should be encouraged to evaluate their own progress, and be asked questions such as: "Did you write more sentences in ten minutes today than you did in previous sessions?", "Did you write more more sentences with less teacher assistance?" and "What kind of pattern do you see on your chart(s) and what does it mean?". Sessions should end with goal setting for both composition length and prompt level.

PROMPTING

Random Prompt Administration (RPA)

In the random condition, prompt levels 2-4 will be randomly assigned to each sentence scoring box prior to the writing session. Following the cue "Tell me what you're going to write next," the student is allowed twenty seconds to generate and vocalize a sentence. If the student fails to self-initiate a sentence within twenty seconds, then the randomly assigned prompt level appearing in the scoring box for that sentence will be given. Following the prompt if the student again fails to self-initiate a sentence within a twenty second interval, then a sentence will be provided by the teacher (Level 4 prompt).

Systematic Prompt Reduction (SPR)

In the systematic condition if the student fails to self-initiate a sentence within the specified twenty seconds, then a series of increasingly supportive prompts is administered until a sentence is produced. Following the cue "Tell me what you're going to write next," if the student does not generate a sentence within twenty seconds, first encouragement (Level 2 prompt) will be offered. If the student again fails to generate a sentence in twenty seconds, then content related questions or suggestions (Level 3 prompt) will be provided. If the student still fails to generate a sentence in twenty seconds, then one will be provided by the teacher (Level 4 prompt).

Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback should only be provided for easily corrected and obviously incorrect word usage or grammatical errors. Spelling does not need to be corrected unless the student asks for assistance or confirmation. Usage and incorrect grammar should be corrected without comment by the teacher when repeating the student's verbalized sentence. Examples would include incorrect verb tense, use of plurals, and informal slang such as "hafta".

If the student verbalizes an appropriate sentence starting with "and", say "that's a good idea, can you say the sentence without starting with "and"? If the sentence is repeated correctly with in the original twenty seconds then the next prompt is not administered.

If the student tends to use "run-on" sentences, simply cut the student off at the conclusion of one independent or independent and dependent clause with "that's a good sentence, write it. You can include your other ideas in the next sentence.

If the student verbalizes a sentence that is not appropriate to the topic, say "that doen't fit well with your topic, can you tell me a different sentence?"

If the student vebalizes an incomplete sentence, use the correction for that prompt level indicated by an asterisk on the prompt chart.

Prompt Levels

Level 1 - Self-initiated

The student verbalizes an appropriate sentence within twenty seconds after the teacher cues, "Tell me what you're going to write first," or "Tell me what you're going to write next." If a student verbalizes an incomplete sentence, the teacher should say, "That's good, but it's not a complete sentence. Try starting with ," or "Can you make it into a complete sentence?," or "Can you add an ending?" If the student verbalizes a run-on sentence, the teacher should repeat the first part of the sentence that constitutes a complete sentence, and say "That's a good sentence, write it." Once the student has verbalized a sentence to write, then the teacher may do anything necessary to enable the student to get it written, such as providing spelling and reinforcement for getting it down quickly.

*For an incomplete sentence, say, "That's not a complete sentence, can you say it in a complete sentence?"

Level 2 - Motivational

The teacher encourages the student to initiate the task.
(EX) "Why don't you read what you have written so far to see what should come next?"
"What are you going to say next?"
"What would be a good way to start your paragraph?"

*For an incomplete sentence, say, "A complete sentence has a subject and a verb. The subject tells who or what the sentence is about. The verb tells what happened. Can you say your idea in a complete sentence?"

Level 3 - Content-related

The teacher provides content cues to stimulate student interaction.
(EX) "How did that make Jim feel?"
"How did Karen respond?"
"Describe what the car looked like."

*For an incomplete sentence, say, "Your sentence has a verb (...) but not a subject. Who is the sentence about?"

Level 4 Literal

The teacher provides a sentence verbatim.
(EX) "Write: Tom decided to leave."
"Write: The more it snowed, the colder Ray became."

Introduction to Study

My name is _____ and I am a student at Penn State University. One of the things I am studying there is how to help students such as yourself learn to write better. The people I work with and myself think we have found a quick way to help you write more on an assigned topic in less time with less help from the teacher.

I will be coming to work with you ten times; each time you will be asked to write as much as you can on a topic in just ten minutes. Sometimes it may seem boring or frustrating but it won't take very long and I think you'll find that it will help you write paragraphs faster in your other classes. You won't be graded on what you write, and this won't affect your grade in this class. Do you have any questions?

O.K. Here is the topic for today.

DIRECTIONS-SPR-NM

When I start the time you will have ten minutes to write as many sentences as you can. Please say each sentence aloud before you write it. If you can't think of a sentence in twenty seconds, I will tell you to read over what you have written so far, then if after twenty more seconds you can't think of a sentence I will ask you a question or give you some ideas about what to write. Finally, if after twenty more seconds you still can't think of a sentence then I will tell you one. Once you have said a sentence aloud I can help you with words or spelling. I will tell you when you have time for only one or two more sentences.

Each time we have a writing session you will try to think of more sentences with less teacher help than the time before.

DIRECTIONS-SPR-MP

When I start the time you will have ten minutes to write as many sentences as you can. Please say each sentence aloud before you write it. If you can't think of a sentence in twenty seconds, I will tell you to read over what you have written so far, then if after twenty more seconds you can't think of a sentence I will ask you a question or give you some ideas about what to write. Finally, if after twenty more seconds you still can't think of a sentence then I will tell you one. Once you have said a sentence aloud I can help you with words or spelling. I will tell you when you have time for only one or two more sentences.

After you have finished writing for ten minutes, we will figure out your daily average prompt score. The prompt score is about how many times the teacher had to help you before you thought of each sentence. Each time we have a writing session you will try to get a lower prompt score and write more sentences than the time before. A lower prompt score means that you are thinking of sentences independently, faster.

DIRECTIONS-SPR-MPP

When I start the time you will have ten minutes to write as many sentences as you can. Please say each sentence aloud before you write it. If you can't think of a sentence in twenty seconds, I will tell you to read over what you have written so far, then if after twenty more seconds you can't think of a sentence I will ask you a question or give you some ideas about what to write. Finally, if after twenty more seconds you still can't think of a sentence then I will tell you one. Once you have said a sentence aloud I can help you with words or spelling. I will tell you when you have time for only one or two more sentences.

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DIRECTIONS-RPA-NM

When I start the time you will have ten minutes to write as many sentences as you can. Please say each sentence aloud before you write it. If you can't think of a sentence in twenty seconds, I will help you. Then if after twenty more seconds you can't think of a sentence, I will tell you a sentence to write. Once you have said a sentence aloud I can help you with words or spelling. I will tell you when you have time for only one or two more sentences.

Each time we have a writing session you will try to think of more sentences with less teacher help than the time before.

DIRECTIONS-RPA-MP

When I start the time you will have ten minutes to write as many sentences as you can. Please say each sentence aloud before you write it. If you can't think of a sentence in twenty seconds, I will help you. Then if after twenty more seconds you can't think of a sentence, I will tell you a sentence to write. Once you have said a sentence aloud I can help you with words or spelling. I will tell you when you have time for only one or two more sentences.

After you have finished writing for ten minutes, we will figure out your daily average prompt score. The prompt score is about how many times the teacher had to help you before you thought of each sentence. Each time we have a writing session you will try to get a lower prompt score and write more sentences than the time before. A lower prompt score means that you are thinking of sentences independently, faster.

DIRECTIONS-RPA-MPP

When I start the time you will have ten minutes to write as many sentences as you can. Please say each sentence aloud before you write it. If you can't think of a sentence in twenty seconds, I will help you. Then if after twenty more seconds you can't think of a sentence, I will tell you a sentence to write. Once you have said a sentence aloud I can help you with words or spelling. I will tell you when you have time for only one or two more sentences.

After you have finished writing for ten minutes, we will count the number of sentences you have written and figure out your daily average prompt score. The prompt score is about how many times the teacher had to help you before you thought of each sentence. Each time we have a writing session you will try to write more sentences and get a lower prompt score than the time before. A lower prompt score means that you are thinking of sentences independently, faster.

#1 VACATION

There have been a lot of advertisements on television for sweepstakes and contests, lately. If you won a one week all expenses paid vacation, where would you go? What would you do? Who, if anyone, would you take with you?

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Describe a person who has done something that you liked or disliked whom you'll never forget. Perhaps your grandmother sent you on a trip to Disneyworld or your father practiced football with you so you could make the school team. Maybe someone did something mean like slashing your bicycle tires or spreading false rumors about you. Tell why you like or dislike the person you'll never forget. What happened to make you feel that way?

#3 SCHOOL

For most students, going from elementary school to Middle or Junior High School is a big change. Do you remember how you felt on the first day? Describe what you did, saw, or felt as you walked into your first class. How was your new school different from elementary school? What were the teachers like? Did you ever get lost or forget your schedule?

#4 DRUGS

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#5 MUSICIANS

Describe your favorite musician or music group. Is your favorite a singer, drummer, pianist or something else? What kinds of music does s/he/they play: classical, soul, hard rock, jazz, country, or something else? How did you first hear them? What are some of your favorite songs? What do you like about his/her/ their music?

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Do you consider yourself a neat person or a sloppy person? Why do you think you developed those habits? Would you like to change the way you are? Describe some of the situations that your neatness habits or someone else's bring about.

#7 PARENTS

Lots of teenagers have problems getting along with one or both of their parents. How is your relationship with your parents? Do you have trouble talking to your parents? What do you think causes problems between parents and teenagers? What do you do to solve problems with your parents?

#8 FIGHT

If there were a fight between two older students at your bus stop or at school, what would you do? Would you let them fight or would you try to stop them? How would you try to stop them from fighting? Would you tell anyone else?

#9 TV

Some people think that watching TV is a waste of time. Do you feel that there's anything worth watching on TV? If you watch TV, what's your favorite program? Do you think kids watch too much TV?

#10 SUMMER

In only a few more months it will be summer! Are you looking forward to summer? Why or why not? Do you have any plans yet for this summer? Will you visit friends or relatives, go to school, or work?

Student _____ Group SPR-
Teacher _____

Session #1 Topic VACATION

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Prompt Level(s)												

Session #2 Topic PERSON

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Prompt Level(s)												

Session #3 Date

Av. Prompt Level --- = Topic SCHOOL

# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Prompt Level(s)												

Comments

_____

_____

Student _____ Group SPR-
Teacher _____

Session #4 Topic DRUGS

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Prompt Level(s)												

Session #5 Topic MUSICIANS

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Prompt Level(s)												

Session #6 Topic HABITS

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Prompt Level(s)												

Comments

_____

_____

Student _____ Group RFA-
Teacher _____

Session #1 Topic VACATION

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

Random Prompt												
# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Prompt Level(s)												

****

Session #2 Topic PERSON

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

Random Prompt												
# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Prompt Level(s)												

****

Session #3 Topic SCHOOL

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

Random Prompt												
# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Prompt Level(s)												

****

Session #4 Topic DRUGS

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

Random Prompt												
# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Prompt Level(s)												

Student_____ Group RPA-
Teacher_____

Session #5 Topic MUSICIANS

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

Random Prompt	4	3	3	2	3	4	2	3	4	3	2	2
# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Prompt Level(s)

****

Session #6 Topic HABITS

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

Random Prompt	2	4	2	2	4	4	2	2	2	3	4	4
# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Prompt Level(s)

****

Session #7 Topic PARENTS

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

Random Prompt	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	4	4	2	2
# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Prompt Level(s)

****

Session #8 Topic FIGHT

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

Random Prompt	3	3	2	4	2	3	3	3	2	2	4	4
# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Prompt Level(s)

Student _____ Group RPA-
Teacher _____

Session #9 Topic TV

Av. Prompt Level --- = Date

Random Prompt	2	3	2	3	3	2	4	3	4	2	4	4
# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Prompt Level(s)

****

Session # Date

Av. Prompt Level --- = Topic

Random Prompt	3	4	2	2	2	3	2	3	4	4	2	2
# of Sentences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Prompt Level(s)

****

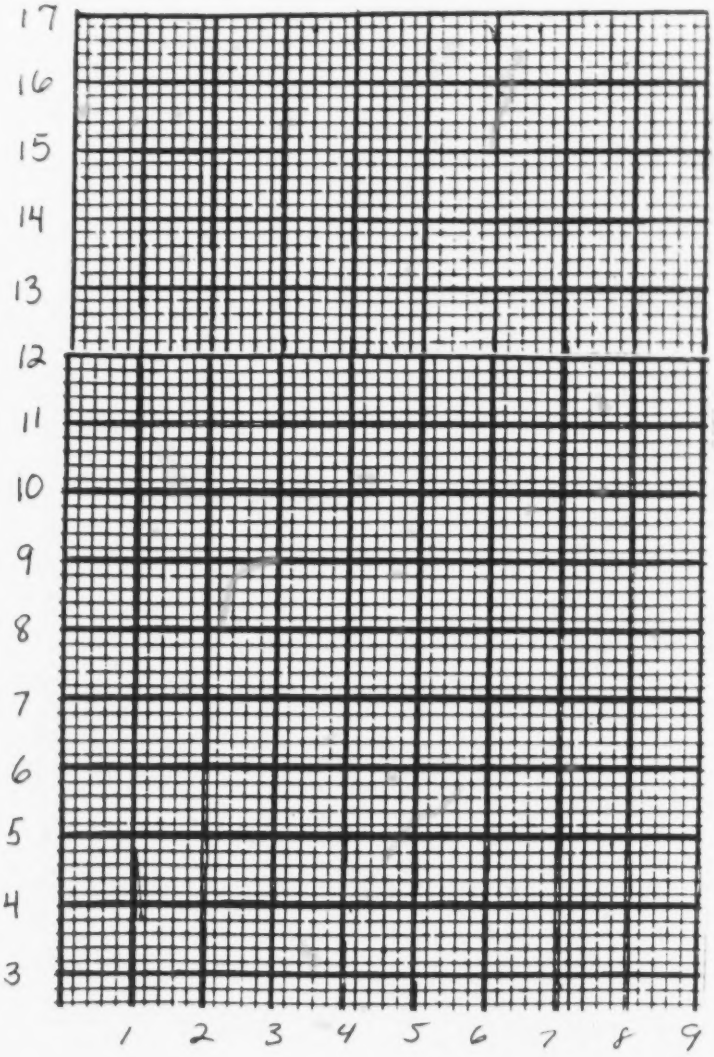
POST-TEST SCORE _____

PPM

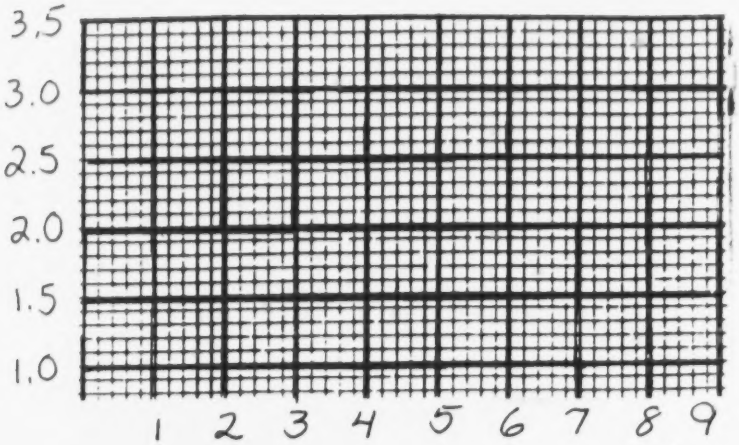
PERSONAL PROGRESS CHART

PROMPTS & SENTENCES

Sentence Production



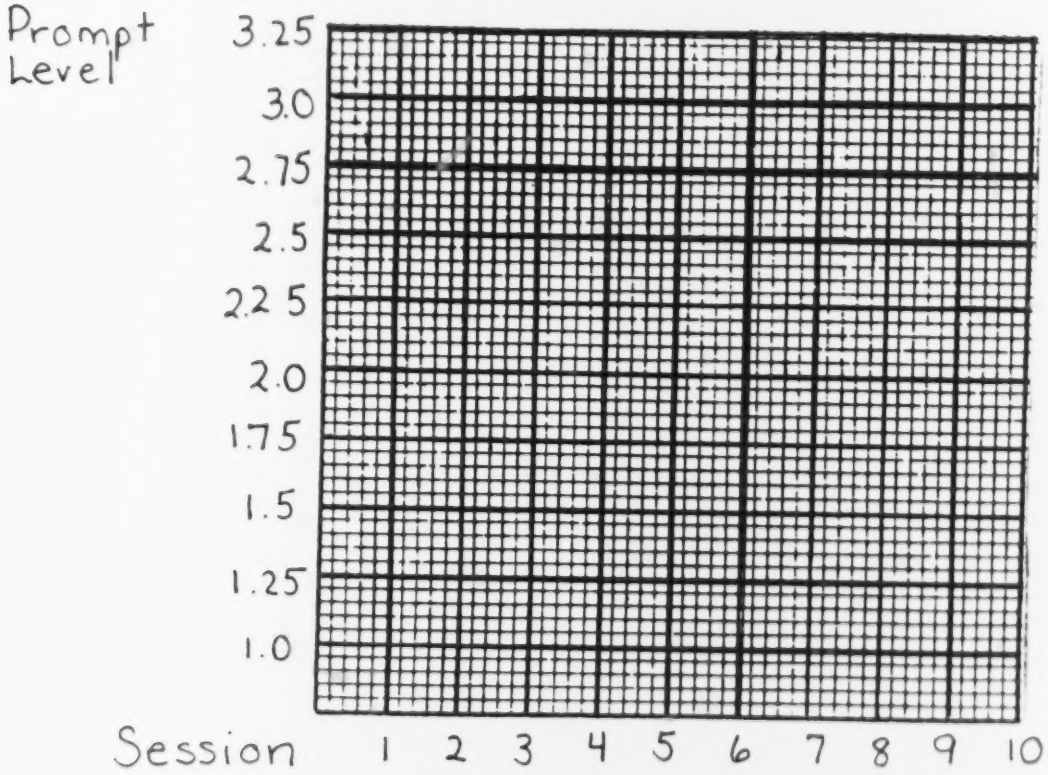
Prompt Level



P M

PROMPT MONITORING

PERSONAL RROGRESS CHART



Appendix D: Composition Rating Scale

COMPOSITION RATING FORM

Student _____
School _____
Group _____

COMPOSITION NUMBER_____

KEY:
1 poor
2 below average
3 average
4 above average
5 excellent

ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT _____
- Paragraphing
- Sequencing
- Purpose
- Transitions

LANGUAGE USAGE _____
- Vocabulary
- Complex sentences
- Imbedded modifiers
- Figurative or descriptive language
- Avoids cliche's and jargon

MECHANICS _____
- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Agreement
- Grammar

AUDIENCE _____
- Ability to motivate and interest audience
- Adaptation to audience
- Emotional impact

TOTAL _____